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ABSTRACT

Competitive athletes' scores on the Profile of Mood States (POMS) test create an iceberg-like pattern known as the "Iceberg Profile." Their scores for tension, depression, anger, fatigue, and confusion are low while their scores on vigor juts upward creating the "Iceberg Profile." Persons in a cooperative relationship are often competing against their own self-interest which creates moods of tension, frustration and anger. To achieve social responsibility, however, people need to cooperate. Cooperation emerges from competition if athletes who are competing against each other are viewed as actually cooperating to achieve a desired outcome, such as spectator entertainment. The need is to encourage and stabilize relationships at an appropriately competitive level. This can be done if the future becomes sufficiently important relative to the present. Another way to promote cooperation is to extend the duration of the interaction. As the interaction extends over time, there is more mutual restraint in the participants' behavior. The third way to encourage cooperation is to structure more frequent contact. Frequent and sustained competitive interactions gravitate to cooperative relationships. (SM)

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COMPETITIVE COOPERATION

The Iceberg Profile

by

Jerry L. Vaughan

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COMPETITIVE COOPERATION

The Iceberg Profile

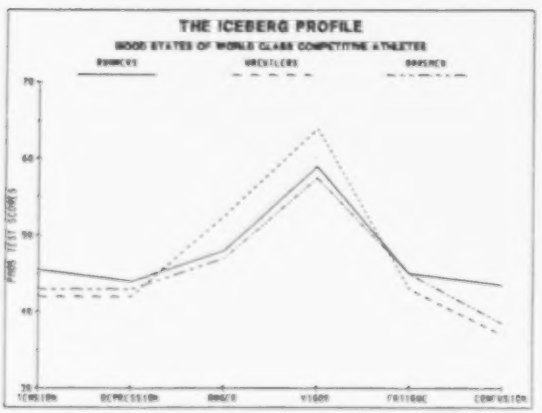
A Presentation
At
The 10th Annual Community Leadership Workshop
Galveston, Texas

May 1, 1987

by

Jerry L. Vaughan
Futurist

Since those of us who are here today are all rational and objective persons -- each of us well educated and certainly living in respect of the traditions of logic and scientific reason -- I don't suppose that there is any harm in opening this morning's discussion with an axiom that establishes the validity and impact of both competitive and cooperative ways of behavior.



SOURCE: Morgan, W.P., "Test Of Champions", Psychology Today, July 1980, p. 92.

A comparison of the mean test scores on the Profile of Mood States (POMS) test for world class competitive athletes in three sports. All three groups show the Iceberg Profile, suggesting that exceptional athletes of all kinds have above average mental health.

CHART 1

First of all however, let's give some thought to this idea -- competitive behavior is a way of establishing and maintaining relationships that really should characterize the animal world and human beings should establish and maintain their

relationships on the basis of cooperation by helping other human beings obtain what they want. Isn't that a nice division of the labor of social responsibility? Oh goodness! We can't really talk about this subject without recognizing and admitting that we are talking about the difference between Creation and Evolution -- can we? You know what I mean -- we do things that are appropriate for the human world and animals do things that are appropriate for the animal world! How many of you find that idea agreeable? How many of you find that idea disagreeable?

Well, if the idea leaves you cold then let's forget about social responsibility for a while -- we'll come back to it later. In the mean time, let's see if we can convince ourselves that competition, within oneself (also known as discipline or will power), between individuals and among organizations (or nations) is really a desirable endeavor.

First, let's make the point that those persons who are competitive -- particularly your world class competitive athletes -- exhibit above average mental health characteristics as measured by the Profile Of Mood States (POMS) test. The characteristic pattern (Chart 1, p. 1) of these POMS scores by successful athletes has become known among sport psychologists as "The Iceberg Profile" because most of the scores are found below the general population average score (50), while the score for "vigor" juts above a line that represents an average score of 50 which characterizes the mood states of the general population (Morgan, p. 97).

Now let's return to our notions about social responsibility.

When you are in a beginning relationship that is to be based on cooperation -- helping or giving others access to goods, services or whatever they want -- you generally find that you are competing against your own self-interest, value system or goal direction (which is usually not to create any dependencies -- no matter how you define them). Dependencies require you to bargain away (or sacrifice) important values -- either cultural, political, social, religious, or economic resources that you would rather control or somehow maintain in your possession. Not everyone that you are associated with or who has a similar self-interest is going to want you to do that -- are they? So now you are not only competing with your altruistic self, you are competing with those in your own cultural (or organizational) environment and probably competing, as far as terms and conditions are concerned, with the very persons whom you think you are cooperating with.

What then are you experiencing as a result of cooperating when you should be competing? Well, if your top competitors (according to the Iceberg Profile) have reduced levels of tension, depression, anger, lethargy, fatigue and confusion -- then your top cooperators must be in a bad mood state! The top cooperators are getting out competed! (I guess that's why we take a cold shower when we are hot and a hot shower when we are cold...we want to re-establish vigor!).

Let's face it, if you like traditional things or values then

you are saying to those around you that you like the comparative advantage that those traditional strategies or values provide -- to YOU. Unfortunately, what represents a comparative advantage to one individual (or culture) is quite often a liability or comparative disadvantage to the self-interest of another individual or culture. From that point on, within someone's perspective, a change needs to occur in someone's attitude or cultural mindset if there is to be an equitable distribution of the resources through which someone (the human world) or something (the animal world) defines its existence. We recognize this concept in terms of ecological balances or "niche strategies" and these are strategies and balances in which competition and cooperation are occurring simultaneously and vigorously in the system.

Let me ask the following question -- are two teams (or two persons) who are competing on the field, track, court, ring, stage, screen or wherever -- actually competing with one another? Isn't it possible to say that they are actually cooperating with one another for their own benefit or perhaps the entertainment of the larger system that consists of the crowd or viewers? Aren't they really cooperating, by competing with one another, to gain and subsequently control the financial or other resources that the system of crowds, viewers, voters or spectators is committing to the competitive scenario?

But also couldn't we say that in the absence of a crowd or spectators, they may be cooperating competitively to become more

proficient at their talent, skill or interest -- isn't that another name for practice, or, yes -- continuing education. And, isn't that a basic strategy that enables us to change or maintain our own niche within our organizational ecologies? Heaven forbid that anyone just competes just to survive -- no indeed, we want progress! Now, if that's right -- what's left?

OK, are your traditional thoughts -- your comparative advantage of the social pleasantry of cooperation -- now competing with my academic thoughts on the social value of the stress of competition? Ah, don't answer that at this moment. Instead, let's be rational and logical human beings and state our hypothesis for the scrutiny of scientific analysis. Here you go, think about this --

IF

EVERY THING (Now that's evolution)

OR

EVERY ONE (Now that's Creation)

IS

EQUAL

THEN

WHO (Or What)

CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

???

IF THERE IS

A

DIFFERENCE

S

THEN NO THING

NOR

ANY ONE

IS

EQUAL...

COMPLEMENTARY, YES!

OH WOW! What does that axiom do for the politics of Creation and Evolution? Well, if you think about it, it probably does a lot of things. But what it lets us do at this point is consider how cooperation emerges from competition. In essence folks, the message for cooperation is competition because there is a qualitative difference that occurs when you are cooperating competitively as contrasted to when you are competitively cooperating. The outcome depends on where you are starting from.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF STRATEGIC COOPERATION

The fundamental question to be asked is, do we want cooperation to occur in all instances? That's a tough one -- it implies that cooperation is not necessarily a good thing. Yet that is exactly the situation -- we do not want competing businesses to cooperate and fix prices. We do not want potential enemies to cooperate and coordinate their actions against us. We do not want a governing body to cooperate with itself and maintain an unfair and unjust system. Nor do we want a husband and wife to cooperate with one another and engage in child abuse. Am I wrong, is there anyone in here who wants those things?

But, we do want to think of cooperation as a good thing in many instances. The question is, how do we encourage and stabilize relationships at an appropriately competitive level? How do we develop relationships at a level of competition that results in a relationship of satisfactory quality and stable cooperation.

This can be done, if the future can become sufficiently important relative to the present. This is called lengthening the "shadow of the future".

The future becomes more important than the present (or certainly as important as the present) if the relationship or interaction of the individuals, organizations or nations can be expected to continue or if it is desired that the relationship and interaction be continued. If that relationship is uncertain or not expected to exist at all in the future, then the next exchange, interaction or transaction is not as important as the present or current exchange, interaction or transaction.

So, when the future is not important enough relative to the present, then no form of cooperation is stable or reliable (Axelrod: 1984, p. 126).

A second way to promote cooperation is to make the exchange, interaction or transaction more durable. For example, a wedding is a public act designed to celebrate and promote the durability of a relationship. However, the durability of a relationship can help not only lovers but enemies as well. The most striking illustration of this point was the way the "live-and-let-live"

system developed during the trench warfare of World War I.

Here's how that worked! The first military stage of World War I was characterized by battles between highly mobile units. It was a very unpleasant scenario of "hits" and "runs" until the battle lines stabilized as trenches. Soon the rank and file soldiers realized that no matter how hard they fought, neither side was really going anywhere. At that point, nonaggression emerged spontaneously in many places along the battle lines. On each side the reciprocity of mutual restraint was preferred to the reciprocity of mutual punishment.

This system of "live-and-let-live" enabled the soldiers of each side to walk around behind their lines within enemy rifle range with no fear of being shot at as long as the reciprocity was maintained. To sustain the miserable conditions of this cooperation in the trenches each army took pains to show the other that it could retaliate if necessary. For example, German snipers showed their prowess to the British by aiming at spots on the walls of cottages and firing until they had cut a hole in the wall. British artillery would then demonstrate that with a few accurately aimed shots they could do more damage if they wished (Axelrod, 1984).

What was unusual about trench warfare was that the same small units of troops (or players) would be in contact with each other for extended periods of time. They knew that their interactions would continue with each other because no one was going anywhere (really going anywhere). The mutual restraint

exercised by the front line troops allowed the two sides to coordinate and reciprocate their actions without having to resort to words. Thus, passiveness ("passiveness"?) reigned ("rained"?) until there was provocation (a score), then retaliation would occur (someone would "run the kick" back).

In the "live-and-let-live" system, cooperation got a foothold through exploratory actions at the local level and was able to sustain itself because of the duration of contact between small units facing each other. Thus, the duration of contact enabled each side to understand and predict the response of its opposition (Axelrod, 1984).

The third way to enlarge the shadow and importance of the future (thus encouraging cooperation) is to structure the interactions of the parties (or competitors) so that they are more frequent. In such a strategic environment the next interaction occurs sooner, and hence the next move in the relationship looms larger than it otherwise would. The increased rate of interaction results in an increase in the importance of the next move relative to the current move. The net result is that frequent and sustained competitive interactions gravitate to cooperative relationships (reflecting how they ultimately choose to define themselves). Fundamentally, it is through competition that roles and ecological niches are determined -- the competitive question becomes, who is going to do what around the "house", "yard", "garden" or "earth".

I am fascinated by the research of Dr. K. Warner Schaie of the University of Washington (Houston Chronicle, April 27, 1987). Dr. Schaie, in a 30 year study, has discovered that the longer couples stay married, the more likely they are to become like each other, eventually sharing the same thoughts, perceptions and even math skills. According to Dr. Schaie, women who marry men brighter than themselves get brighter and women who marry losers -- get worse (skeptically speaking, I would think that it could also work the other way).

Well, the result of the live-and-let-live ethic of the World War I trenches was undoubtedly a prolongation of the trench misery due to the fact that the front line units were cooperating when they should have been competing. The fighting was not resolved until the commanders introduced disruptions in the form of hundreds of small raids. This resulted in neither side knowing what to expect next -- thus effectively preventing their battalions from exercising their own strategies of cooperation based upon reciprocity. When this occurred, the real level of niche strategy or cooperation that was sought -- the end of the war -- was achieved.

A good way to increase the frequency of interaction between individuals or organizations is to keep others away. Certainly, if others are kept away (or not attracted) then cooperation between persons or organizations is likely to increase -- if you were smart, what would you do if you and Ms. Fate were marooned on an island to which no one was coming?

Any form of specialization that tends to restrict interactions to only a few others would tend to make the interactions with those few more frequent. This is one reason why cooperation emerges more readily in small towns than in large cities. The principle is always the same: frequent interactions within an environment that places importance upon the future of the relationship helps promote stable cooperation that is of course competitively derived. In essence, through a competitive endeavor, what is achieved by each individual or organization is knowledge about, respect for, and trust in what the other will do to support their position. Another way of saying it is that through competition predictability occurs. From predictability cooperation emerges and within cooperation, compatibility may or may not be present. If compatibility is not present, then a difference exists. If a difference exists, then in terms of niche strategy or organizational ecology, each individual or organization grows to fully appreciate the competence and subsequently the role (or position) played by others in a cooperative environment that has been competitively derived.

Oh yes, "The Iceberg Profile"...what about football players? Well, on the POMS tests these players personality pattern was decidedly healthy. They seemed to be men intensely committed to life's challenges, who go about their business with a relaxed style and a clear sense of purpose. They conformed closely to the pattern of "The Iceberg Profile" described by Morgan (Psychology Today: June, 1980). They're in a lot better shape than most people emotionally and less angry and hostile than

ordinary folks. Most surprising and least stereotypic of all, football players are less aggressive than the average student. However, there is one exception -- watchout for linebackers in dark alleys (Nation and LeUnes, 1981).

Now, who are the key linebackers on the football field? Well, you have the defensive linebacker and the quarterback. They stand there and look each other right in the eye. The defensive linebacker goes after the quarterback's "body". The quarterback gets the picture, drops back and passes out. Nobody ever stands up for a "line" in an arena.

Now, let's close with this thought -- the first person on earth had only the future ahead and the last person on earth had only a history behind. They both had choices.

Besides, in order for there to be a history, the future must run an unknown course -- first.

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